Senators Told Johnson Officials Began Army Check on Civilians

By RICHARD HALLORAN
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WASHINGTON, March 2—A senior Pentagon official asserted today that the "highest" officals of the Johnson Administration initiated Army surveillance of legitimate civilian political activity in 1967 and 1968 and were aware of many details of that operation as it expanded.

Assistant Secretary of Defense Robert F. Froehike told a Senate subcommittee that Cabinet officers, sub-Cabinet officials and White House personnel took part in planning and executing all phases of monitoring and quelling the civil disturbances of those times.

Although he mentioned no names, Mr. Froehlke's testimony clearly referred to Attorney General Ramsey Clark, Secretaries of Defense Robert S. McNamara and Clark Clifford, Secretary of the Army Stanley R. Resor, Deputy Attorney General Warren Christopher, Under Secretary of the Army David E. McGiffert and a special assistant to the President, Stephen Pollak.

Mr. Froehlke, asked by a newsman to define the extent of President Johnson's involvement, said: "I don't know. I didn't think it proper to carry my inquiries that far."

His testimony before the Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights, headed by Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina, was the first full-scale public disclosure by the Pentagon of the scope and intensity of the Army's domestic intelligence operation that was most active between mid-1967 and mid-1970.

Earlier revelations by former military intelligence agents focused mainly on their own information-gathering activities. Other news reports have covered the operation as seen by senior military officers in the Pentagon. Today's testimony went the next step up onto the level of political authority.

Mr. Froehlke said that "there was a crisis-oriented attitude with respect to civil disorders" from 1965 to 1968 and that, particularly in 1967 and 1968, "heavy emphasis was placed by civilian and military officials at the highest levels of government on improving the preparedness of the Federal Government" to respond to disturbances.

"White House personnel participated in the general planning and direction of total civil disturbances planning," he said. "They were also involved in the establishment of requirements for and the tasking of the military services to provide the civil disturbance information needed."

Directed From Justice

Mr. Froelhke, who has been heading a Pentagon investigation of the intelligence operation, said: "The records also demonstrate that the Attorney General was recognized by all as the chief law enforcement official of the Federal Government. The Department of Justice similarly participated in the planning and direction of the civil disturbance activities, including civil disturbance information collection by the military services."

"Nonetheless," he continued, "the records reveal that little, if any, direction and guidance was provided to the military services from the White House or the Department of Justice in written form."

He said that "even in the detailed planning performed by the civil disturbance task force, headed by the Under Secretary of the Army, both the White House and the Department of Justice had representation."

"I might also mention," Mr. Froehlke said, "that the committees of the Congress were made aware of the military's participation in the collection of civil disturbance information."

He referred specifically to a Senate Government Operations subcommittee session in April 1968, at which the Under Secretary of the Army, the Assistant Chief of Staff for intelligence, and the Attorney General were questioned on intelligence about the Poor People's March.

Mr. Froehlke reversed previous assertions by the Pentagon that no file had been kept on Democratic Senator Adlai E. Stevenson 3d while he was State Treasurer or Illinois.

"The evidence," he said, "indicates that there was a file bearing the name of Senator Adlai Stevenson 3d in the field office of the Army's investigative and counter-intelligence unit in Chicago and that this file consisted wholly or primarily of newspaper clippings."

He also said there was evidence of a similar file on Representative Abner J. Mikva, Democrat of Illinois. But he categorically denied that either Mr. Stevenson or Mr. Mikva had been the subject of surveilance by military intelligence agents.

Mr. Froelhke said that a new Department of Defense directive on collecting information about civilians went into force yesterday. It is based on earlier Army Department directives limiting such surveillance, and specifically forbids electronic surveillance of elected officials or political candidates, or other persons or organizations except as authorized by law.

Also prohibited is deceptive surveillance of civilian organizations or information gathering by military intelligence agents without the specific prior approval of the Secretary of Defense. Computer data banks on civilians are not to be maintained except with the permission of the Secretary.

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